ABSTRACT

Flow identification value masks are identified based on, and used to mask a flow identification value associated with packets in a router, packet switching or computer system, any other device. These masks may be specified in access control lists or using

5   any other mechanism, and typically are added to an associative memory or other mechanism keyed on their corresponding flow identification values for performing fast lookup operations. A lookup operation is performed based on the flow identification value associated with a particular packet to identify the correspond mask, which is then used to produce a masked flow identification value, and based on which, a value is

10   updated in a data structure and/or other processing of the packet is performed.

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